
Options for Making Concurrency More Multimodal

Response to SHB 1565 (2005 Session)



Prepared by:

Mark E. Hallenbeck, TRAC-UW

**Dan Carlson, Keith Ganey, Evans School of
Public Affairs**



**Anne Vernez Moudon, Luc de Montigny,
Department of Urban Design and Planning
University of Washington**

**Ruth Steiner, Department of Urban and
Regional Planning
University of Florida**



**Washington State Transportation Research
Center (TRAC-UW)**

University of Washington, Box 354802
University District Building, Suite 535
1107 NE 45th Street
Seattle, WA 98105-4631



Prepared for:

Puget Sound Regional Council

December 2006

Options for Making Concurrency More Multimodal

Response to SHB 1565 (2005 Session)

Prepared by:

Mark E. Hallenbeck, TRAC-UW
Dan Carlson, Keith Ganey, Evans School of Public Affairs
Anne Vernez Moudon, Luc de Montigny, Department of Urban Design and Planning
University of Washington

Ruth Steiner, Department of Urban and Regional Planning
University of Florida

Washington State Transportation Research Center (TRAC-UW)
University of Washington, Box 354802
University District Building, Suite 535
1107 NE 45th Street
Seattle, WA 98105-4631

Prepared for:

Puget Sound Regional Council

December 2006

Please note: The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors who is are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Washington State Transportation Commission or the Department of Transportation. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

*Funding for this study was provided by the Washington State Legislature
(In accordance with 2SHB 1565, 2005 Session)*

Acknowledgements

The TRAC/UW study team and the Puget Sound Regional Council extend sincere thanks and appreciation to the following individuals who provided thoughtful participation in the discussions and deliberations that enabled completion of this study.

Legislative Consultation Group for Multimodal Advisory Committee

- Senator Mary Margaret Haugen
 - Senator Joyce Mulliken
 - Representative Jim Moeller
 - Representative Fred Jarrett
-

Advisory Group for Multimodal Concurrency Study

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

- Joseph Backholm, Senate Republican Caucus
- Jay Balabas, House Republican Caucus
- Mary Fleckenstein, House Democratic Caucus
- Kim Johnson, Senate Transportation Committee
- Kathryn Leathers, House Transportation Committee
- Ethan Moreno, House Local Government Committee
- Dory On, Senate Transportation Committee
- Genevieve Pisarski, Senate Government Operations and Elections Committee
- Mark Streuli, Senate Democratic Caucus

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

- Jennifer Ziegler, Office of Financial Management (OFM)

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

- King Cushman, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), Study Project Manager
- Charlie Howard, PSRC
- Lon Wyrick, Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC)
- Dean Lookingbill, Southwest Regional Transportation Council (SWRTC)
- Gordon Rogers, Whatcom Council of Governments
- Ed Hayes, Spokane Regional Transportation Council

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CTED)

- Joyce Phillips
- Dave Andersen

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (WSDOT)

- Brian Lagerberg
- Eric Phillips
- Paula Reeves
- Elizabeth Robbins
- John Shambaugh
- Brian Smith
- Theresa Smith
- David Tanner
- Stephanie Tax
- Ralph Wilhelmi

OTHER KEY PARTICIPATING INTERESTS

- Rob Fellows, King County Metro Transit
- Gloria Gould-Wessen, City of Kent
- Peter Hahn, City of Renton
- Kris Liljeblad, City of Bellevue
- Sue Osterhoudt, King County Roads
- Rick Perez, City of Federal Way
- Joel Pfundt, City of Redmond
- Ashley Probart, Association of Washington Cities
- Peter Thein, Washington State Transit Association (WSTA)

Executive Summary

Transportation Concurrency and the GMA

The Growth Management Act (GMA) introduced the idea of “concurrency,” the policy goal of ensuring that development not outpace the provision of infrastructure. The GMA directs jurisdictions to define and establish level of service (LOS) standards for their transportation systems. If new development will cause the transportation system to exceed the established LOS standards, the jurisdiction must deny the development unless transportation improvements and strategies are implemented to accommodate the development within six years, a process known as *concurrency mitigation*.

Limitations in Existing Transportation Concurrency

The majority of local concurrency programs focus almost exclusively on auto congestion. Because this approach only counts vehicles and fails to account for people who walk, drive with friends or co-workers, ride transit, or bicycle, it has proven insufficient for denser jurisdictions. As density increases in urban areas, a growing share of travel occurs via alternative modes, and roadway capacity becomes a poor proxy for the transportation system. With roadway-only concurrency measurement systems, these communities can only choose between accepting increasing roadway size and/or congestion or denying development.

A second limitation in the current process is a lack of consideration for the regional transportation impacts of new development. Concurrency does not consider regional congestion, except when through-traffic volumes clog locally controlled roads.

Recommendations

The project team recommends that regions adopt a two-tiered concurrency system. The objective is to provide a more flexible incentive and disincentive system at the regional level while encouraging application of more multimodal transportation system measures at the local level.

Local Concurrency: Local jurisdictions should adopt multimodal concurrency measures that examine the existence (or lack) of the key facilities and services needed by the geographic subarea for which the concurrency system has been developed, regardless of the mode involved. This means that the concurrency measures will change from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and may even change from subarea to subarea within a jurisdiction. Failure to meet the standards set for the “local” portion of the recommended multimodal concurrency system will result in the denial of a development permit.

In more developed urban centers where the desired street system has been fully built, we suggest that the concurrency approach be based on the operational performance of that street system in terms of the multimodal travel time between key activity centers or along key travel corridors, or the multimodal travel time between regional growth centers and the outer limits of a radius of the average regional work trip distance (currently about 10 miles). In lightly developed, residentially oriented jurisdictions on the fringe of a metropolitan region, a suggested system would combine the need for a planned grid (redundant) street network, traditional arterial level-of-service calculations, and analysis of park-and-ride space availability. For suburban jurisdictions that fall between these two extremes, the real multimodal issue is likely to be the

amount of transit service that is available, rather than the performance (travel time) of that service or the arterial network. An adopted concurrency standard might be expressed something like, “LOS D for an arterial unless high frequency transit (e.g. more than six to ten buses per hour) travel is available on that roadway during the peak period, in which case the acceptable roadway standard could be LOS E.”

Alternatively, a jurisdiction may designate its geographic core or regional growth center as “exempt” from LOS calculations but establish, in collaboration with the exempt center’s transportation management association (TMA), specific programs for limiting single occupant vehicle use to/from the TMA district during peak periods. This could be coordinated with and provide additional implementation support for the state program recently enacted under the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law establishing Growth and Transportation Efficiency Centers (GTEC). It is recommended that all employers within the core/center area be required to join the TMA.

Regional Concurrency: The project team recommends that regional agencies be given the authority to define, develop and apply a “regional concurrency system” that is in addition to the locally applied concurrency system described above. This regional authority would most likely be the existing MPO/RTPO unless an alternative regional authority were created or designated. To acknowledge the diversity of regions around the state, each regional transportation plan (RTP) currently required by state law would develop its own definition of “regional concurrency.” The technical application of the regional concurrency system would only need to measure and address the regional impacts of proposed development, and the region would not have the authority to deny development (that would continue to be a local determination).

The regional authority should be empowered to develop a system of incentives and disincentives designed to encourage development in locations that can be most cost effectively served by publicly supported transportation facilities and services. Such a system may, but does not need to, involve the imposition of “impact charges” on developers based on the cost to the regional transportation system that the new trips impose. Those charges will be high for developments that impose large impacts and low for developments that impose smaller impacts. For example, each development might be charged a user fee based on the number of vehicle–miles–of–travel (VMT) that the development was expected to contribute to the regional freeway system.

The regional authority will be free to select any mechanism that provides incentives to build in areas where public costs for meeting the travel demand created by development will be lower, while imposing disincentives for building in areas where development will increase the public costs of meeting travel demand. For example, transit oriented developments (TOD) built in a defined Growth and Transportation Efficiency Center (GTEC) and/or along an existing high capacity transit route might be exempted from any concurrency review (even at the local level), thus decreasing the development cost and speeding up the permitting process. Developments not built within these constraints would have to conform to local concurrency regulations.

“Regionally concurrent” can be defined either technically or politically. If a technical approach is selected, key transportation and land-use characteristics must be defined to indicate whether or not a geographic area is “regionally concurrent.” (An example of such an approach is given in the main report for this project.) Any jurisdiction that wishes to have a “regionally concurrent” sub-area will know exactly what types of land-use and transportation system attributes it needs to change or improve in order to gain that designation.

A simple political designation can also be used. For example, the region could define all GTEC's as being "regionally concurrent." It could also define any location within x-miles walking distance of a major transit station as being "regionally concurrent." Changes in these designations can be addressed through the existing regional planning process, performed in conjunction with the designated regional concurrency authority.

The project team believes very strongly that the regional concurrency authority must control/influence some transportation funding in the region. These funds can come from new sources or from existing sources. Where new funds are developed, all regional transportation facilities/modes should be eligible to receive those funds. Where existing funds are allocated on the basis of regional concurrency priorities, those funds should be spent on the mode that would have received them had they not been allocated to the regional concurrency authority.

The project team also believes these recommendations would benefit from more review from those agencies that must implement concurrency. We encourage additional outreach, testing and feedback with these agencies.